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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE to newspapers in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama.

The Fish and Wildlife Service of the United States Department of the Interior recommended closing the Mississippi Flyway to wild geese shooting during the 1946 hunting season not alone because of the heavy kill of honkers at Horseshoe Lake last season but because the kill in other parts of the flyway has increased steadily during the past few seasons. Albert M. Day, Service director, declared today.

In support of this statement Mr. Day pointed to the fact that in six of the 14 states along the flyway, the kill of Canadas reached an estimated total of 38,000 in 1945, or almost six times the number taken at Horseshoe Lake. Based on the best figures available to the Service, the increases above the 1944 season ranged from 240 to 600 percent.

In Michigan, for example, a total of 23,000 geese were taken in 1945, approximately one-half of which were Canadas, as compared with some 4,800 honkers killed in 1944. Indiana showed a similar trend, the kill of geese increasing from 1,200 in 1944 to 6,000 in 1945. In Minnesota, the 10,000 Canada geese shot last year was nearly three times greater than the total kill in 1944. Wisconsin's take of Canada geese jumped from less than 1,000 in 1944 to around 4,500 in 1945.

Illinois was the only state in the flyway that showed a reduction in the take. In 1945, because of the Federal closure of Alexander County after five one-half days of shooting, the kill was limited to 6,500 birds

in that area where it had been 9,200 in 1944. This "pin-point" management was possible because of the concentration of birds at Horseshoe Lake. In the balance of the flyway, however, as explained by Mr. Day, the only control of the take from the widely scattered flocks is by length of season and daily limits.

"Closing the entire flyway in 1946, therefore, rather than Alexander County, Illinois, alone, was essential to insure adequate protection to Canada geese in the Mississippi Valley," declared Mr. Day.

Some goose hunters along parts of the flyway have been making strong complaints because the Service found it necessary to close this flyway to Canada goose shooting during the 1946 season, according to the Service director, "and have concluded that the entire flyway was closed solely because of the excessive, and much-publicized, kill of Canada geese at Horseshoe Lake. This was not the case. This is, of course, the first instance in which a single flyway has been closed to a migratory waterfowl species. No closed season was made for such states as the Dakotas and some others which border the flyway because the vast majority of birds crossing these states use other flyways where the kill has been less serious and the population has not declined significantly."

The present status of the Mississippi flyway flight of geese is serious and in some respects desperate, emphasized Mr. Day. It has gone down steadily in numbers since about 1938. The after season populations dropped from around 80,000 birds in 1944 to an estimated 55,000 in 1945, or about 30 percent. A safe harvest to maintain even stable breeding populations should not exceed 15 percent of the birds at the beginning of the season.

"The management of these geese concerns the hunters in the Mississippi Valley alone," concluded Mr. Day, "because the flight of geese down the Mississippi flyway hasn't the slightest relationship to the Canada goose migration down the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, nor even to those geese in the Rocky Mountain flyway and the western plains area. Overshooting means the crippling of their own sport. Conversely, adequate protection insures their having geese to hunt in the future."

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